

The Patterns of Mercy.

BEING THE
S U B S T A N C E
O F A
D I S C O U R S E

Delivered at

*Ballinderry in the County of
Antrim,*

In the YEAR 1754.

By J O H N C E N N I C K.

That through your Mercy they also may obtain Mercy.
Rom. xi. 31.

T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

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T H E

Patterns of Mercy.

I TIM. i. 15, 16.

This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am chief; howbeit for this Cause I obtained Mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all Long-suffering, for a Pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting Life.

IN St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, wherein he repeats the great Doctrines of I Godliness, as became a Person in his high Office and Place of Trust, and which he delivers now into his Successor's Care to keep for Christ's sake, he several Times speaks after this Manner, "This is a faithful Saying, &c." and this was not done as if any Part of the Scriptures, or

this his Charge were of less Authority or Truth, but as *Moses* often renewed his Message and Errand to the *Israelites* with, "All these Words the Lord thy God commanded," or as the Prophets very often repeated, "Thus saith the Lord;" and Jesus himself, when he delivered Doctrines of the utmost Importance, and Things necessary to our eternal Happiness, generally began with "Verily, verily I say unto you," thus does the Apostle in the Text, when he writes to another great Minister of Christ, and indeed to all who labour in God's Vineyard, that with Boldness and Courage they might propagate such confirmed Doctrines with all their Might, and give more Heed to the divine Charges delivered in so extraordinary and in so solemn a Manner.

The Time will not allow me to speak of the many blessed Doctrines handed down to us in this Way, I shall therefore speake chiefly of this main Doctrine of the Apostle, and upon which all the Hopes of poor Men are grounded, namely, Our Saviour's coming from Heaven into the World to save Sinners. "This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners."

This Doctrine is properly the Substance of the whole Gospel, and is every where taught us in the New Testament, both from our Lord himself and by all who heard him, and were sent by him to bear the glad Tidings through the Earth, to every Land and Nation, and to invite and beseech Sinners to be reconciled to God, and come back to Jesus, the Shepherd and Bishop of their Souls, that they might be saved.

This, however slighted by so many, and though by some even scorned and despised, especially by all the Opposers of Salvation by Grace alone, is yet a
true

true Doctrine, and worth their hearing and believing, it is worthy of the Acceptation of all Men.

If an Offer of Life and Pardon could be made to Rebels in Distress and Chains, or if the News of Liberty and Redemption should be brought to the Slaves in the Gallies, or such as spend their melancholy Days in Prison or Banishment, or should the most wretched and poor Person in the World be offered a full Receipt from all his Creditors, and a fine Estate besides for the longest Term, all would think the Offers worthy of their Acceptance, and leap for Joy at the good News; but should the News of Liberty come to his Ears who thinks himself in no Danger, or should the Tidings of a general Release be sent to Freemen, or Bread be brought to the exceeding rich, and to such as fare delicately every Day, it would have no such effect; and it is no other than a false Conclusion of their being safe, good enough, not fallen from God, or so desperately wicked, and in Danger of perishing as they really are, that makes the Gospel to be heard so coldly and indifferently by more than half the World.

Could a Preacher tell his Auditors where every one should find Treasure hid, or how they might ensure to themselves a vast Fortune, or could he teach them how to free themselves of every Pain and Sickness at once, and in what Way they could be immensely rich, O how would People flock to hear him! there would be scarce Room for the Concourse any where, and he would not be able to make his Voice reach to the least Part of his Hearers; but when a Messenger of the King of Saints comes, and brings the News of the Kingdom of God opened, and preaches Free Grace, Redemption from Death and Hell, eternal Life, and all the Blessings of the World to come, into which all should press eagerly, how coldly is he heard?
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When he speaks of "the Treasure hid in the Field," how few believe the Report? And when he declares how near our Saviour is to justify and help the Sinner, how willing he is to pardon all Sin, and to come with his Father into them, and there make his Abode, how very few open the Door and look for him? and in how exceeding few is "the Arm of the Lord revealed?"

The Enemy of Souls, the God of this World succeeds amazingly even in Christian Countries, in keeping Men ignorant of Jesus and his Love to Sinners, and when his Divinity is only slightly confessed, and his eternal Redemption considered but superficially and at a Distance, it is no wonder that the blessed News is so indifferently entertained.

When Jesus entered *Simon* the Pharisee's House he got no Kiss, no hearty Welcome, no Water to wash his Feet, no Oil for his Head, no Incense burnt before him, and no precious Ointment perfumed his Chamber, the Reason was, he did not know his Guest, he did not feel how much he wanted a Saviour; but the Sinner, the Harlot *Mary*, who was called by him out of her Sins, and invited to the Kingdom of Heaven, thought she could never make enough of the Lord, she embraced his Feet, kissed them, washed them with Tears, and broke her Alabaſter Box of Spikenard upon them, and loved much. Thus is it now, while Men deceive themselves and fancy they are good Churchmen, pious, and religious enough, and that there is no Danger of their future State, there a few Prayers, a little Alms, or some Acts of Self-denial and Mortification, lull to Sleep the stirring Conscience, and make the poor Heart at Peace without Christ. To such, as well as to the Wanton, the Prophane, the Worldling, the Resolutely wicked, and Lover of Pleasure, the Gos-
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pel of Salvation seems unworthy their Acceptance, and is neglected to the very last; but an awakened Soul, a Man who feels his own Sinfulness as an intolerable Burden, and who wants to be saved, but trembles at the Word of God, has many Fears about his Condition, &c. he hears that God our Saviour came from Heaven, out of mere Pity and Compassion to save undone Souls, to help poor People, and to undertake for them and be their Saviour, and this is the best of News to such an Heart. Deep Humility and a solid Conviction and Consciousness of his Sin and whole corrupted Nature, makes him only willing to know, if Jesus can receive such a Wretch as he has been? and when he can be persuaded of this, O how entirely does he leave all his old and darling Sins! with what Joy does he receive our Saviour's Offer of Forgiveness, and is glad in his Salvation? His Heart leaps and bounds in him for Joy when the Holy Spirit within whispers the Word of Reconciliation, and then he thinks upon inviting others to the same Grace, and is ready every where to tell how worthy of all Mens Acceptation this good Doctrine is, "that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners," of whom, he thinks, I am chief.

It is indeed a glorious Gospel, it is a Privilege bestowed upon Men beyond all Hopes and Wishes, and which makes all who accept it happy and blessed for ever; and all who slight, or reject, or delay the closing in with so gracious an Offer, thereby make themselves of all Men the most miserable.

But then who is Jesus that is coming into the World is of such Importance? He is the eternal God! He is that Lord, that Creator, and Divine Being, against whom all had sinned, and who out of tender Mercy to the World came from his Throne and Majesty,

Majesty, and was incarnate, a Man, a Servant, and
 whose whole painful Life, sorrowful and shame-
 ful Death, was endured by him with this sole and
 pure View, to save Sinners. He had no Design but
 singly and entirely to help them out of their Con-
 demnation and Slavery, and to bring them in Peace
 back to him. He would have been Glorious, and High,
 the same if we had been left in our Guilt, and suf-
 fered Hell eternally; but as he loved all his Works,
 and chose not the Death of a Sinner, and as he knew
 Hell was not made for Man, but for the Devil and
 his Angels, he pitied us when we were sunk into
 their Ruin, and come under their Judgment, and be-
 fore all his innumerable Company of Angels and
 blessed Spirits resolved to be their Saviour. This Je-
 sus has now bought them out of the Hand of the
 Enemy; all Souls are now his, the Soul of the Father
 and the Souls of the Children, they are his purchased
 Possession, and he has on their Account made a perfect
 Amends, Atonement, and Satisfaction in his hea-
 venly Father's Sight, he has prepared an everlasting
 Righteousness for them, and opened such a Fountain
 in his own Blood that washes out every Sin, and
 even the Remembrance of it from before God; and
 now has he ordained it as an everlasting Gospel, to
 be published and announced to every Creature, that
 whoso in the World would be glad to be saved, and
 who sincerely wants Mercy and Salvation, many
 come to him and have it. The Worst and most
 Undeserving, even the Rebellious, are invited to this
 Happiness as to a Feast, and this Gospel, these true
 Sayings are worthy of all Acceptation, since it comes
 from God Almighty, and is a Gift worthy only of
 that Giver, who is the Author and Cause of eternal
 Life, and who hereby gives the best Gift he can
 give, namely, Himself, his Kingdom, his Spirit,

his

his Blood, Body, and Righteousness, and whatever is able to make us completely happy and perfect.

Many, yes, many as the Stars in Number, have been Witnesses of this Grace, and now reap the great Salvation, the Fruit of the Lord's Toil and Servitude for their Sakes.

Lest Satan should suggest to an honest and well-meaning Soul, that his Sins were too many, too great, or of too heinous a Nature to be pardoned, Jesus our kind and dear Saviour has set forth Examples of his Mercy, and, as it were, chosen out from all Classes of Sinners the very vilest, and such as were come to the Height of Danger, and these he has graciously saved, as Patterns to them which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting Life.

St. *Paul* calls himself one of these, and says, "I am the chief of Sinners, but obtained Mercy for this Cause," and sets himself forth as a Monument of free Mercy. None can believe that in respect of outward gross Sins he was chief, for he had been brought up in the most strict way; but he speaks in respect of his having, out of an unbelieving Heart, despised and slighted Christ's meritorious Death and Righteousness, and, in the Manner of the Pharisee, attempted to establish his own, and out of a false Zeal persecuted the Disciples and Doctrine of Jesus. In this Sense he calls himself the chief of Sinners, i. e. one who has sinned above others, and whose Crimes were of a Scarlet Dye, and who had given our Saviour and his Spirit so much Trouble to conquer and subdue him to the Faith.

All truly awakened Souls think with the Apostle thus, and whether their Lives have been notoriously vile in Mens Eyes or not, they feel too deeply their Sin to extenuate or lessen it; they can easily excuse others, but themselves they condemn and

loath in Dust and Ashes, and, like *Jeremiah* and St. *James*, confess, "the Heart is deceitful above all Things, and desperately wicked;" and it is to encourage such to hope for Mercy and draw near to Jesus, that he has exhibited and shewn forth so many Instances of his Mercy and Compassion in the Scriptures, who, as St. *Paul* calls them, are "Patterns, Examples, and Mounments of Mercy, and Pillars in the Temple of God." Of these there are five eminent in the Gospel, and who seem to be the chief of every Rank of Sinners, the Account of whose Conversions and Mercies are written for our Sakes, that we who want Mercy may obtain it through their Mercy, and venture to come boldly to the Throne of Grace by their Example. The five whom I shall mention are, *Mary Magdalene*, *Zeccheus*, the Thief who was crucified with our Saviour, *Cornelius*, and St. *Paul*, of all these I will speak freely, and first of *Mary Magdalene*.

This poor Woman was taken from the Head of the Unclean and Incontinent; she had been a known Sinner, a public Harlot and Adultress. It is likely she had been the Ruin of many, and seduced them at first into Sin; her whorish Heart had made her "seven fold the Child of the Devil," who no doubt thought surely to have her; Lust and Impurity ruled her and led her Captive; her Shame was her Boast, and perhaps her polluted Body was hastening to the Grave, through her intemperate and unchaste Life, while her wretched Soul was ready to perish for ever. In this Estate was *Mary* when Jesus came seeking the Lost, and preaching the Gospel of Repentance and Remission of Sins, and called her out of her Slavery and Danger. Some of the first Christians say, that our Saviour had been preaching on the "Shepherd who left the ninety and nine in the Wilderness"

ness to seek one Lamb that he had lost." It was however on that Day Jesus dined with *Simon* that she was converted. She followed him into the House weeping; her haughty Looks were humbled, her brazen and impudent Face washed with hundreds of Tears, and she who before could appear boldly before all the World, and on purpose entered Company with her Eyes full of Adultery, and darting her Fire on all Sides, now crept behind and kneeled at Jesu's Feet, like *Eve* and her guilty and naked Husband, when they heard the Voice of the Lord God in the Cool of the Day in Paradise. O come hither ye lecherous and debauched Livers, ye Whoremongers and Harlots, ye whose Beds and Bodies have been defiled like *Magdalene*, look upon her, see those Lips which uttered such Obscenity, tremblingly kissing the Lord's Feet; see her Hair once curled and platted to entice Men to sin with her, now hiding her blushing Face and wiping her Tears away as fast as they fell upon his Feet. With all her fine Cloaths, her splendid Vail, her seducing Attire and Ornaments, she sinks in the Dust before our Saviour, and makes Tears and Sighs speak the Language of her Heart. Come, O come and do likewise! Do not think, I dare not, I may not, my Sins are too many, my secret Crimes and Pollutions are too predominant, and render me unfit to pray, unfit to hope for Mercy, since she is set forth as a Pattern to those of her Class who repent and believe in Jesus. Think, O think where she is now, yonder she sits at Jesus Christ's Feet a pure Virgin in Heaven, our Saviour had Mercy upon her, and said before *Simon* the Pharisee, and all those who sat at Meat with him, "Thy Sins that are many are forgiven thee, go in Peace." At once she found her Soul redeemed, the Enemy her Master lost his Hold, while God her Saviour spake her clean.

This was the Woman who afterwards loved Jesus so much; this was her that before the self-righteous *Simon* obtained Mercy; this was she who had the Honour to minister of her Substance to Jesus, and to stand with the Virgin *Mary* under the Cross, and who first saw the Lord after he arose. He did not first appear to his Mother or to the Twelve, or to his Favourite *John*, but to her who before Day was up, and weeping alone, because she had missed her Lord. This was the first Preacher of the Resurrection, the highly-favoured Person who got the first greeting from the risen Redeemer, and is sent by him to appoint the Place where all the rest should meet him. I dare say, no spotless Maiden now shines brighter round the Throne, or more loves and adores the Lamb! All her Fellow-Saints see her, and worship God because of the great Mercy bestowed upon her. Lift up your Eyes of Faith, ye who have followed her in Lusts, and see what a Pattern of Mercy she is for you! see what the Blood of Jesus has accomplished on that once wretched, but now happy Woman! A Drop of Jesu's Blood can make you clean, like her, and make the worst and most defiled, chaste Virgins in a Moment. "The Blood of Jesus cleanseth from all Sin," and does not only damp the impure Nature, prevent and extinguish wild and unholy Fire, but eases the Conscience, and washes away the very Remembrance of Sin from before the Lord. O let this Woman's Mercy compel and encourage you to apply to the same gracious Master, and you shall find that the History of *Mary* was written not for her Sake only, but for your Sakes also, to whom the same Grace shall be imparted if you believe on him.

Let the Sense of your Disobedience and abominable Deeds bow you down at his Feet; shed your
Tears

Tears there, and thence stir not till the same Lord who granted her eternal Life, and made her so near and dear to him, vouchsafes you to hear, "Thy Sins are forgiven;" I mean, till his Spirit has made it clear to your Heart that all your Sins are pardoned and done away in the Blood of the Lamb, and your Lusts and Impurities killed and abolished in his cold Sweat and Tears. Since the chief of Sinners is saved, venture you also and be saved freely, and experience, "that it is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners."

Zeccheus was another Monument of Grace; he perhaps had not gone on in *Mary's* Course, but was a public Sinner; he was the CHIEF OF THE PUBLICANS, and he was rich. The Publicans were a sort of unconscionable Men who farmed the Taxes and Tribute-money, and who had it in their Power to use Extortion, and distress and oppress the Poor; the strict Part of the Jewish Church held them *Anathema*, and our Saviour and St. *John* ranks them with Harlots and the worst of Men; but, beside his being of this Business, beside his being the Chief of this Clan, he was rich. He was in double Danger, he was ungodly and without any Religion, and he was rich. Our Saviour had said, "how hard it was for a rich Man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?" and if so, here was one rich and wicked too; all in *Jerico* knew the Sinner *Zeccheus*. Come near ye covetous, ye worldly minded, and miserable People, ye Oppressors of the Poor, and ye who are rich, though your Danger is great, and the Obstacles in your Way many, yet if you are minded to be saved and want to see Jesus, behold *Zaccheus* is a Pattern of Mercy for you. See the Man who without Pity grinded the Faces of the Poor, who stood like a
Flint

Flint unmoved at the Cry of the Widow and Fatherless, who could distress the Needy, and thrust into Prison, threaten, and oppress his Tenants, and who got his Gain with Cruelty and Extortion, who took barbarously the Bread, as it were, from the Orphans and Hungry, and made many a Child suffer Want, while the Parents wept bitterly unminded; behold the Rich, who was in Danger of crying out with *Dives* for a Drop of Water in vain for ever, and of being one of that Number who have their good Things in this Life, he has found Pardon! Jesus saw him in the Sycamore Tree and hastened him down, that he might bring Salvation to his House, for, saith he, "To-day I must abide with thee." O happy Day! O happy *Zaccheus*! He that shewed no Mercy when it was asked with Tears and Cries, finds Mercy without so much as asking for it. This exalts the Doctrine of Free Grace indeed, and makes *Zaccheus* a glorious Pattern of Mercy. He made haste and received Jesus into his House and into his Heart, and had scarce received Pardon and believed unto Salvation, but his Faith worked by Love, and yielded the Fruit of good Works: "Behold Lord, said he, I will give half of my Goods to feed the Poor, and where I have wronged any one by false Accusation I will restore him four-fold." Thus it is where a true Faith in Christ is, there are good Works, and a tender Heart immediately. No Soul in *Jericho* could have received the Lord with so much Joy as this Man, he had much forgiven him, and he loved much. If any who hear me would fain be saved, but because you are rich tremble, O take Courage by the Example of *Zaccheus*; take our Saviour's Advice, give Alms of such Things as you have, disperse abroad, give to the Poor, and begin to be faithful Stewards of the Mammon of Unrighteousness,
and

and believe in him, and so shall you get Treasure in Heaven. Or are you afraid because of your former Covetousness and Search after Riches? Does the Remembrance of your Atheism, Infidelity, Carelessness in religious Matters, Oppression of the Poor, hard Behaviour to your Inferiors, or want of Tenderness and Kindness to Persons in Necessity, and who were in Debt, in Prison, and overwhelmed with Penury, &c. bow you down and dishearten you? See Jesus Christ's Compassion on *Zaccheus*! See the worst and most hardened of Wretches has found Mercy, the chief of the Publicans is saved! O go, guilty and unworthy of Pity as you are, stand before the merciful Jesus, shew him your public and atrocious Crimes, your secret Injustice, and hidden Offences, spread all open before him, and fall at the Judge's Feet a self-condemned and guilty Sinner; he came to save such, his Bowels of Compassion yearned over such. "It is a true Saying, and worthy of your Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners;" plead this, and this alone, and stand only in *Zaccheus's* Place with the same willing Heart to see Jesus, with the same believing Heart, and you shall find his Mercy to all Eternity.

The Dying Thief is another eminent Pattern of Mercy, and Witness that Jesus came to save Sinners.

This Man seemed hardened above measure, else he could not have joined with his other Fellow Criminal in the Insults and Blasphemy of the Multitude: His Blood-guiltiness (for in all Likelihood he had been a Murderer) his Robberies, and Thieving, seemed to lie with small Weight on his Conscience; it appeared as if Sin had seared it, and made it obdurate and hard as the nether Mill-stone; it was as if
he

he had no Thought of his Danger, Body or Soul, but was springing headlong into eternal Flames; while he joined the Scoffers and Mockers, how did our Saviour pity him! He saw how far Satan had prevailed and deluded his Slave, and with strong Cries and Tears interceded for him, and was heard; his Petitions reached the Ears of his Almighty Father, and rebounded, as it were, to the Thief's Heart, he awaked at once out of his Sleep, the Infidel believes in Jesus, and called him Lord, the Blasphemer repented of his Blasphemy, and beseeches the King of *Israel* to think upon him when he should come into his Kingdom. Surely all, even the vilest, must have wondered at his Reprobate Behaviour before, but above Measure they must be astonished now to hear him sue to him for Mercy, whom before he had so derided and despised, and as much all in Heaven and Earth must have wondered when Jesus gave him that sweet and merciful Answer, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He was an open and public Sinner, and as openly and publicly did the Lamb absolve, reconcile, and save him: He took him home with him in Peace, and from the very Brink of Hell brought him to Heaven. Here then look ye poor Rebels, ye Thieves and most criminal and guilty Men, ye Unjust and Wicked, behold Jesus "made his Death with the Wicked," and stretched out his Hands as if he meant to offer both his guilty Partners in suffering, Mercy. Look and see how the chief of Felons, the chief of Sinners is saved! It is likely this Man had lived an abandoned and debauched Life, careless of God and his own poor Soul, a Lover of bad Company, idle and wonton, till his Crimes brought him to that shameful End. So far Satan led him, and would have carried off his Prey had not a dear Saviour inter-

interposed and shewn Mercy; but he did it so openly that he might make him "an Example and Pattern to those who should hereafter believe on him to everlasting Life," also to give Hope to such as turn to him on their Death-Beds, and who repent in their last Hours; but it was especially to shew, that he justifies the Ungodly, and that even when an unjust, careless, or most profligate and bad Person is disposed for eternal Life, and wants to be saved, he may; let him apply to the Friend of Publicans and Sinners to the Son of God who came into the World to save Sinners, he shall not perish, he shall be saved. Perhaps some may think, I have been unchaste and unclean with *Mary*, I have been covetous and hard-hearted with *Zaccheus*, and wicked, unjust, dishonest, and a Liar, a Swearer, a Blasphemer with the Thief, and what then? Should all their complicated Crimes centre in you, and you be guilty of all, and were even the Sins of all the World upon you, Jesus is the Lamb that takes away the Sin of the World; he is just such an almighty and tender-hearted Saviour as you want, and because he knew you were lost, perished, and undone without him, and could not recover, or by any other Means get delivered from Satan and the Wrath to come, therefore he came into the World to save you, and has set forth so many Examples and Patterns of Mercy to encourage you to turn to him with all your Hearts and be saved.

Cornelius the Centurian at *Cæsarea* is another of these Patterns, and of whom I must also speak a little. I will not reckon him of the Sort of *Mary*, or number him with *Zaccheus*, or rank him with the Malefactor, for it seems as if he was eminent in another way. He was certainly famous among the Roman Heathen for Bravery, since he was a Centurion of the *Italian* Band, and for Piety, because he

fasted, was devout, just, gave much Alms, feared God, and prayed always; so far the Light of Nature and a tender Conscience, helped by the Morality of the Doctors among the Philosophers, had brought him, but he was still without Christ, and unsafe; for could Morality and his Obedience to Natural Religion have saved him, the Angel appeared to him in vain, and sent him to hear the Gospel from St. *Peter* in vain, but he must hear the Words of *Peter* whereby he should be saved; and this is a clear Proof that such err who think without our Saviour to get to Heaven: But *Cornelius* is a Pattern to all who look after Mercy and scarce know how. He was in his Way a good Man, and wanted to be saved, and Jesus, whom he knew not, would not disappoint him; and to this Day, whenever Souls are sincere and honest in desiring Salvation, (let them be *Turks*, *Jews*, or *Heathens*, and seek it with Wisdom or foolishly) they will find it; our Saviour, who revealed himself to *Abraham* when he was an *Heathen* and blessed him, and who sent his Angel to *Cornelius*, will find Means to bring them to the Knowledge of his Gospel, and will send some to preach Jesus and his Redemption to them: Their having lived like *Cornelius* without the Benefit of Revealed Religion shall not hinder them to come to Heaven; they shall hear the Gospel and be saved; God shall send some faithful *Peter* to them, who shall preach Christ and his Merits to their Soul's Health, or some Book shall set forth that open Door to them, or God by his Holy Spirit shall manifest his Son, and lead them to all the Means of Grace, and to the attaining perfect Happiness and Righteousness by Christ Jesus. In this respect therefore is *Cornelius* a Pattern of Mercy, in that, though he was not under the Law of *Moses*, nor had the Privilege of the *Jews*, when

when he wanted Mercy God shewed him Mercy, and when his Moral Obedience, Universal Benevolence, and strict Observance of the Laws of Nature could not satisfy him, but he felt he lacked perfect Righteousness, the Angel of the Lord led him to hear of that Man "in whose Name is preached Forgiveness of Sins," and he heard, believed, was baptized, received the Holy Ghost, and is now safe with the innumerable Company of the First-born in the Kingdom of God.

The last that remains to be spoken of is St. *Paul* himself, who, in the Text, styles himself, the Chief of Sinners. He differed much from *Cornelius*, in that he was no *Heathen* nor called upon other Gods, but was a strict *Jew* under the Law; and, as *Cornelius* sought Righteousness without the Law, so *Paul* sought it by the Law, and profited in his Religion exceedingly, being of the strictest Sort in his Church, and more zealous for the Law and for the Traditions of the Fathers than many in *Jerusalem*; he was a Person who carried the Matter of Righteousness, perhaps, farther than any one, was of the beloved Tribe of *Benjamin*, the Son of a devout and strict Parent, circumcised the eighth Day, lived in all good Conscience, and, as touching the Law, blameless; was in Favour with the High-priest, the Sanhedrim, and the Elders, a Disciple of *Garnatiel*, and indeed had all the Advantages of Education and Religion, but knew not the Righteousness of Faith in Christ. This made him so angry with the Christians; they preached Christ; they said, that that Person who was executed on the Cross, who died the cursed Death, and was numbered with Transgressors, was the Lord and Christ, through whose Name only could be obtained Remission of Sins, and by Faith in whom Righteousness was imputed. All his Education and good

good Breeding did not hinder him, he joined the rude Multitude to blaspheme such a Doctrine, which set at nought Self-righteousness and a Man's own Holiness, and assisted at the killing of St. Stephen, keeping their Cloaths who stoned him, and consenting to his Death he banished some, made others renounce our Saviour, got others scourged, and with all his Might persecuted such as called upon the Name of Jesus, scorning and despising his Blood and Merits, and trampling his Atonement and Righteousness under his Feet; but lo! after all, our Saviour's Grace overtakes him, and the self-righteous Saul, like a poor perishing Criminal, continues Day and Night to pray, without eating or drinking, for Mercy. He saw the Necessity of a divine and better Righteousness than his own; and when God had brought down his Heart, stripped him of his Fig-Leaves, his beggarly Raiment, and the Righteousness of his Works, then he pardoned him, and clothed him with his own Righteousness, and justified the Chief of Sinners. Hear this ye who have been of this Sort, and valued so much your Duties, Piety, and Alms; and thought so little of our Saviour and his Death, like the Apostle, deny all your own Goodness, and come and trust the Blood of Christ alone, and you shall be saved, though you have been lifted up like *Capernaum*, as it were, to Heaven, and thanked God, with the Pharisee, that you were not so bad as the Drunkards, the Publicans, and Extortioners, and foolishly thought yourselves well off and in a good Way, but who now are ashamed of your Thoughts, and who blush at your Spiritual Pride, and even shudder to approach the Lamb you have so disesteemed, or to ask the Righteousness you have slighted, or to implore the Mercy you have despised; let the Example of St.

Paul

Paul encourage you yet to call upon the Name of **Jesus**; and though your Sin may appear to have been the chiefest of all Sins, in that you have so long sought by other Ways, and, as it were, by another Door to get to Heaven, and put up the Idol of your own Righteousness in the Place of Christ, and dreamt that your Obedience, Charity, and Prayers could buy your eternal Happiness, and your Self-denial make an Amends for Sin, when nothing less than the dying of God's only Son could accomplish this. I say, though all your Pride and Vanity be a sore Burden to you now, fear not, but wash away your Sins calling upon the Name of the Lord. I know if you are truly awakened you must think yourselves the Chief of Sinners indeed, for you must feel how bad it is to slight our Saviour, and how much Trouble he has had to make you truly religious, to submit to his Righteousness, and yield to be saved by Faith alone, freely.

I have now spoken of these five Persons who have been eminent as Patterns of Mercy, and who were at the Head of the principal Classes of Sinners. In one of these Classes almost every one may find himself; but perhaps there may be some who think themselves guilty of all, and who are sensible of their unchaste Deeds and impure Nature, with **Mary**; like her, they have lived in Pleasure and Wantonness, rioted, feasted, and indulged their vicious and sensual Appetites, lived at Ease and in Luxury, wasted their Bodies and impaired their Health with intemperate and debauched Living, &c. like **Zaccheus** they stand convicted of having used unlawful Measures in securing to themselves Riches, nor find themselves guilty of Covetousness, Hard-heartedness to the Poor, Oppression, Cruelty, and Extortion, Perjury and False-witness against the Innocent,

nocent, and the like; besides, they have sinned with the Thief, have hated their Brother, been Murderers therefore before God*, passionate, fond of bad Company, given to Drink, careless and irreligious, Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God, fond of Games, unfair and deceitful, unjust, and having deserved for secret Crimes and black Deeds to die, Swearers, Blasphemers, and, withal their bad and sinful Life, tempted to imagine themselves Christians, or satisfied their Consciences that others were as bad, only Hypocrites, and supposed indulging of their Lusts and Passions, &c. were not Sins, since Nature prompted them on; yea it is possible, amidst all manner of Disobedience, to dream one is a good, sociable Person, a merry Companion, that means no Ill, not of the worst Sort, but in many respects to be praised, and if at Times such frequent Church, give away a few Alms, and refrain for a Time from outward and gross Crimes, they can cheat themselves, and hope they have made some Progress in Righteousness, &c.

If some should think I have been a Sinner with all, and in great Measure am guilty with every Class of Sinners, yet let them so think, I have to deal with a God whose Mercies are as his Majesty, whose Blood is Almighty, and whose Right Hand saves to the uttermost. Only bow down at his Feet, conscious of your being indeed the chief of Sinners, and sue for Pardon, and Iniquity shall not be your Ruin. Let your Hearts repent unfeignedly, and with Tears seek Forgiveness at the Foot of the Cross, resolved, like *Jacob*, not to let the Lord go till he has blessed you with Salvation, and you shall surely find it. The self-righteous Spirits will find the hardest Work to submit to Christ Jesus's free Grace, but when they

* 1 John iii. 15.

they are heartily tired and weary with seeking Happiness and Perfection, they will be at last glad to sink at Christ's Feet, and ask it there as a poor Sinner; but, as I said before, this costs the Soul and the Saviour much before it is done.

I know by Experience this, I was brought up strictly, taught Religion from my Childhood, and carried the Matter of Righteousness very far, and do believe solemnly, that our Saviour has had more Trouble in bending my poor Heart to his free Salvation, and conquering my self-righteous Spirit, than in saving some hundreds of Sinners besides; but I have obtained Mercy, and I set to my Seal to this true Saying, "that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am Chief." May you all happily experience the same Mercy, to the Glory of his Grace, to whom be Praise and Salvation for ever. Amen!

An H Y M N.

I.

O GOD if thou hadst but abhorr'd
To wear our Flesh and Blood,
I never had approach'd the Lord,
But at a Distance stood.

II.

A Sense of my Unworthiness,
My Guilt and just Desert,
Had kept me in the worst Distress,
And sunk my hopeless Heart.

III.

But since thou hast incarnate been,
And took the Saviour's Place,
Only to save from Hell and Sin
The helpless human Race :

And

IV.

And since by thee a countless Troop
Are now got safe to Heav'n,
Who once were Sinners, I have Hope,
And pray to be forgiv'n.

V.

In Heav'n above, in Earth beneath,
Or in the Pit below,
There's none deserves the Second-death.
More just than me, I know.

VI.

I know, in Thought, in Deed, and Word,
I've put thy Soul to Grief;
I am the chief of Sinners, Lord!
I am the Sinners Chief.

VII.

My Sins have made thy Cross, my Guilt
Has caus'd thy Wounds and Pain;
For me, unclean, thy Blood was spilt,
By Means of wicked Men.

VIII.

But let a Soul redeem'd so dear,
Be precious in thy Sight;
Wash me, and Sin shall disappear,
And be abolish'd quite.

IX.

In pard'ning one so vile as me,
Thy Mercy shall be shewn,
A Monument I too shall be,
Of Mercy on the Throne,

29 MR 59

F I N I S.